

▯ Skyrocketing Heating Oil Prices Squeezing Working Families -

- With ▯ Over 34,000 ▯ Households in 19th District Waiting on LIHEAP ▯ Assistance, Hall Urges President to Stop Blocking Emergency Heating Funds -

Carmel, NY – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) today announced that he has urged President Bush to stop blocking funding for a government program that helps needy families heat their homes, and unveiled data showing that if conditions do not change families in the Lower Hudson Valley can expect to pay 25 percent more than last winter in home heating oil costs. Skyrocketing oil prices have driven up the cost of home heating oil, which is used each winter by thousands of Hudson Valley families.

"We're not even into the deep cold of a New York winter, but every time Hudson Valley families need to warm up by burning heating oil they end up burning a hole in their wallet," said Hall. "As the temperatures get colder and demand drives prices up even higher, home heating costs may threaten to break the bank for many local families."

Congressman Hall has joined with 85 other Members of Congress in writing to President Bush asking for the immediate release of the remaining \$20 million in fiscal year 2007 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) contingency funds that help low-income families fill up their fuel tanks, and for his support of \$2.41 billion in new LIHEAP funding that was included in the Labor, Health and Human Services 2008 Appropriations bill. Bush vetoed the appropriations bill earlier this month.

LIHEAP is a block grant program under which the federal government gives money to states, who then develop eligibility criteria, administer the program, and distribute the funds to needy households. This program is particularly important to cold-weather states like New York.

"New York needs additional funding immediately to make sure needy families, people with disabilities, and senior citizens are safe and warm this winter," said Hall. "We need to take swift action so that these high energy prices aren't the last straw for the Hudson Valley's most vulnerable households."

Tens of thousands of Hudson Valley households rely on the LIHEAP program, including 34,486 in Hall's 19th Congressional District. With crude oil recently hovering near \$100 per barrel, home heating oil prices have escalated dramatically this year. The most recent weekly price released by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) for home heating oil in the Lower Hudson Valley is \$3.43 per gallon, an increase of almost 31 percent from last year. For the overall month of November, prices are up more than 27 percent from last year. If the price continues to stay this high above last year's levels throughout the 2007-2008 heating season, projections from Hall's office indicate that households would pay 25 percent more this year in home heating oil costs than they did last year. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that this winter the average Northeastern heating oil home will use 632 gallons of heating oil, meaning that the average household in the Lower Hudson Valley is expected to pay \$2098 in heating costs.

"If nothing is done, home heating oil prices will take a big bite out of family budgets in the Hudson Valley," said Hall. "I urge President Bush to act now."

In their letter to President Bush, the Congressmen wrote, "LIHEAP is vital to protecting the public health and safety of low-income families. When families do not have access to sufficient energy, they may resort to unsafe heating methods and do not have the proper means to refrigerate or prepare food for their children. In addition, without a sufficient LIHEAP benefit, seniors living on fixed incomes often have to decide between buying life-saving prescriptions and paying utility bills. For individuals and households that may have to face these difficult choices, LIHEAP makes a real difference in their ability to cope with adverse circumstances."

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